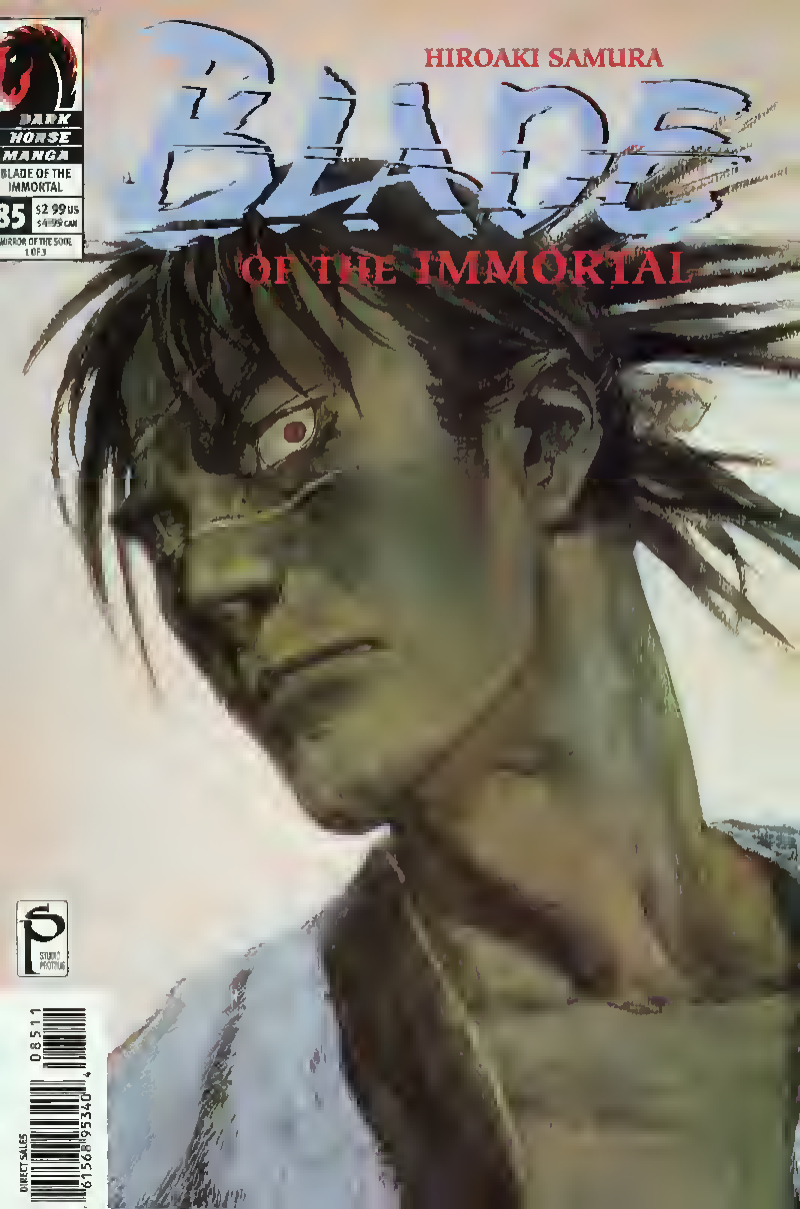
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

gumbo-
Immortal Scanner

yuneha
Nice enough to distro the stuff

THE STORY SO FAR

- Series: Blade of the Immortal
- Date: 2004 01.04
- Volume: 13?
- Chapter: 085
- Format: Left to Right
- pages: 00-32 (33 jpgs w/cover)
- Size: 7.91MB
- Source: Dark Horse Montly Issues (UPC 6156895340)
- Last Rls: Scryed Vol 03

A letter in this issue, but it's not worth reading.

ENJOY!

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *ronin*

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi *ryū dojo* destroyed by Itō-ryū

ANOTSU
The leader of the Itō-*ryū* sword school.

MAKIE
Former Itō-*ryū* swordswoman and geisha

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, myatical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupted lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Two years earlier when her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Itō-*ryū* swordsmen Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi-*ryū dojo* fifty years before. A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu; a similar quest now haunts Rin. Upon learning of Manji she enlisted his aid to destroy the Itō-*ryū* and avenge her parents.

After leaving Manji to complete her quest alone, Rin prevails over great hardships and comes into a strange, unsteady alliance with Anotsu in order to survive on the run in Kaga. Nearly overcome by hunger and exhaustion, Rin tries to throw Anotsu off guard by asking if she can join the Itō-*ryū*, but Anotsu refuses and insults her fighting ability. Assassins then converge on them but are quickly cut down by Anotsu's unique weapon. Discovering that these assassins are Kensui's students, Anotsu runs back to Kensui's sword school for an explanation. Unable to deal with the fact that he was forced to betray Anotsu, Kensui commits suicide—as does Hisaka. Anotsu's new wife Rin and Anotsu are now trying to flee Kaga with a band of Kensui's students on their trail.

designer DEBRA BAILEY editors TIM ERVIN-GORE and PHILIP W. SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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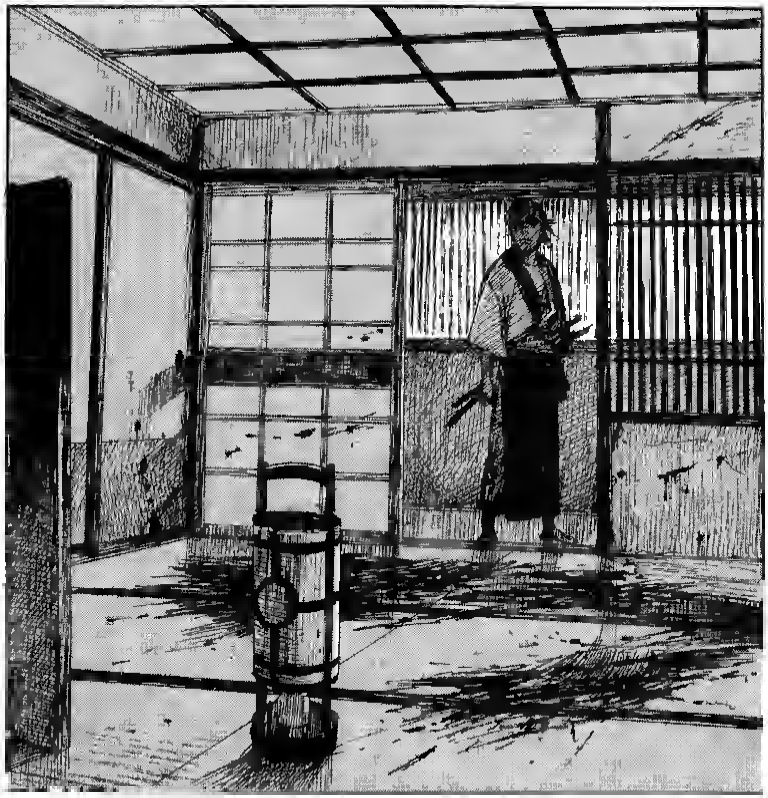
無限の住人

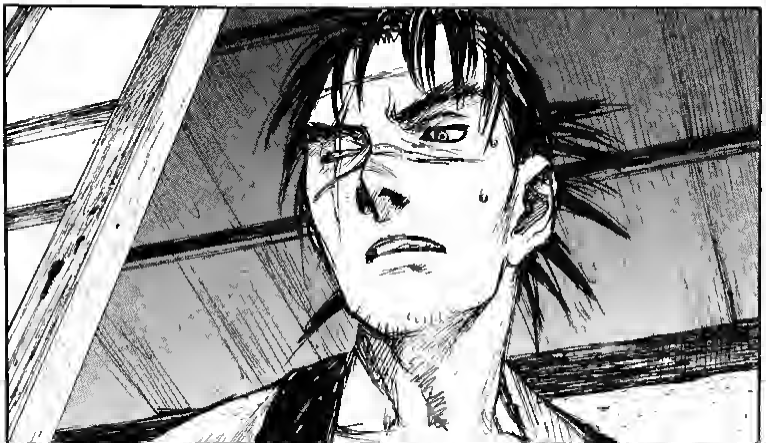
MIRROR OF THE SOUL

– part one –

YO!
ANYBODY
HERE?!

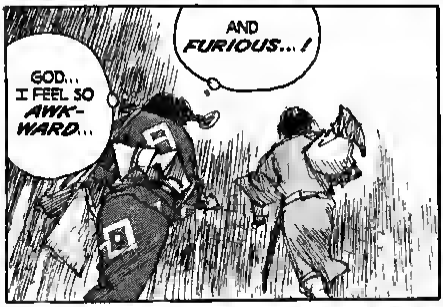
.....
.....
.....
TAK
WHAT THE HELL...?
AND THIS IS THE PLACE, FOR SURE.
SHIN-GYOTŌ-RYŪ... THAT'S WHAT GIICHI SAID HE HEARD.



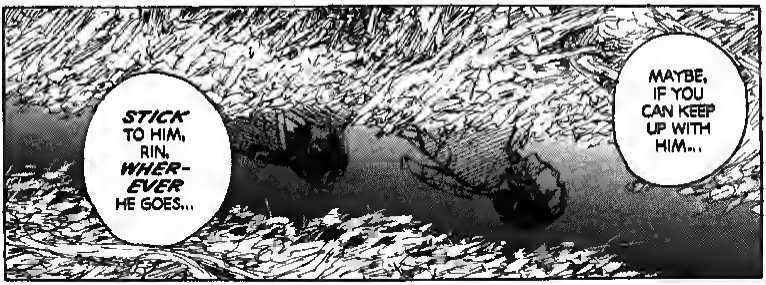


SO...WHAT THE HELL IS *THIS?* NO *RIN*... NO *ANOTSU*...
SHIT, NOBODY AT *ALL!*
HEY!
WHAT ARE *YOU* PUFFING AWAY FOR?! GET OFF YOUR BUTTS!
WE'RE HITTING THE ROAD!
AW, MAN... HAVE A *HEART*, BOSS. WE JUST *GOT* YOU HERE!

LET'S SEE... WE'LL HIT KANAZAWA, HOOF IT UP KURIKARA PASS AND THEN...
YOU LAZY SLUGS! YOU CHARGE ME AN ARM AND A LEG, AND YOU GOT THE NERVE TO WHINE?!
CAN'T WE TAKE A--


GOD... I FEEL SO AWK-WARD...
AND FURIOUS...!

ONLY... FURIOUS AT WHAT?
AT MYSELF, FOR FEELING AWKWARD AROUND HIM?


STICK TO HIM, RIN, WHER-EVER HE GOES...
MAYBE, IF YOU CAN KEEP UP WITH HIM...

...YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE TO TAKE HIM OUT.
HOLD ON!

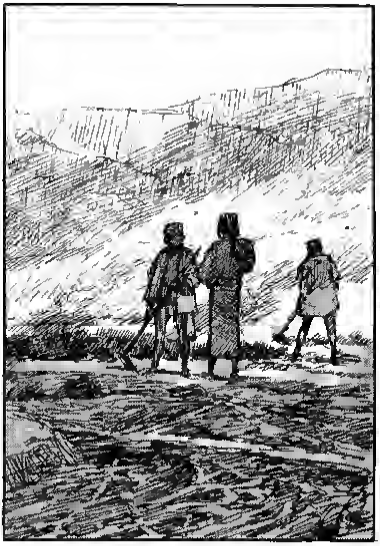
LIKE YOU SHOULD TALK!
VERY FUNNY!
WHAT? WORN OUT ALREADY?
I NOTICED WAY BACK, BEFORE WE STARTED, BUT...
I JUST THOUGHT I'D MENTION SOME-THING.
...YOU'RE REALLY NOT LOOKING VERY WELL.

YOU THINK SO...?
YOU'RE WRONG.
OH, AM I...?
SHIRAKAWA VILLAGE
LIE TO ME, WILL YOU...? AS IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT, TOO...
MAYBE I HIT HIM TOO HARD...?
THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT...

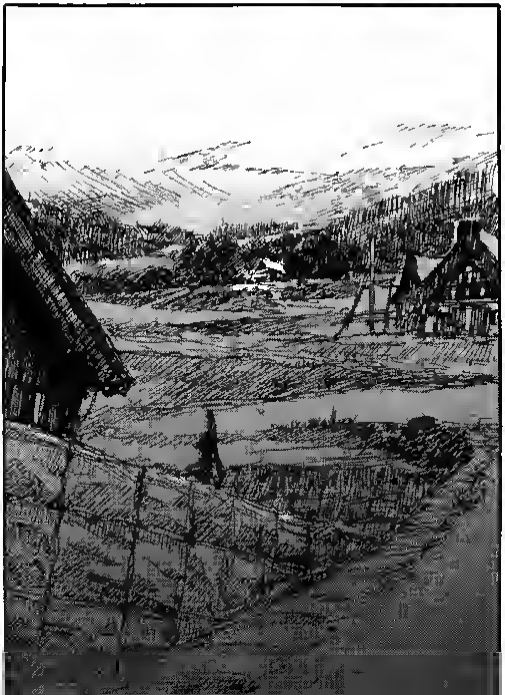
THEY'RE BURNING THE SUMMER FALLOW...
NEVER SAW THAT BEFORE

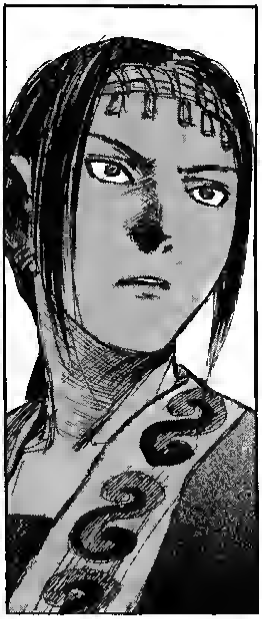
WANT TO REST A MINUTE? WATCH A BIT...
SAY YES! DEAR GOD, SAY YES!
I CAN'T TAKE ANY-MORE...!
HERE.
.....
.....!
I HAVE SOME... BUSINESS... IN TOWN.
YOU WON'T FIND ANY FANCY TEA HOUSES HERE...
...SO JUST BUY SOME DRIED SWEET POTATO FROM A FARMER.
YOU'RE... NOT JUST GETTING ME...
...OUT OF THE WAY SO YOU CAN TAKE OFF...?

I DOUBT THEY'VE FOLLOWED US, BUT YOU MUST FEEL UNEASY WITHOUT A SWORD.
HERE. TAKE THIS, TOO.
NO. LATER.
AH?! BUT... WAI-
B-BUT... .....?



AYE...



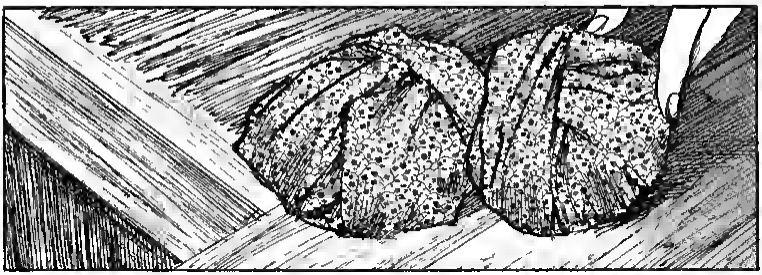


NO
NO
YES...?
DO YOU WANT A MINOGO ...?
OR...
.....
.....
IT'S ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
I... HEARD YOU WERE HERE.

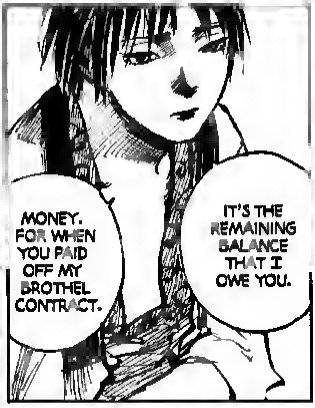
.....
.....
.....
SOBBING
CLICK

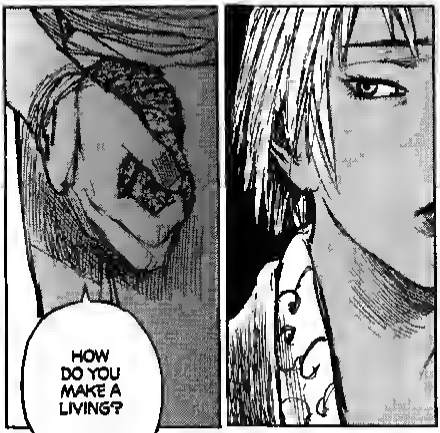
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
YOU LOOK... THINNER.

YOU, TOO...
DO I? NO...
JUST... TIRED FROM THE ROAD.
OH... BEFORE I FORGET.
THERE'S SOMETHING I MEANT TO GIVE YOU, IF I EVER SAW YOU AGAIN.
WOULD YOU LIKE COME IN? REST A LITTLE?
.... WELL.



.....?
WHAT'S *THIS*?

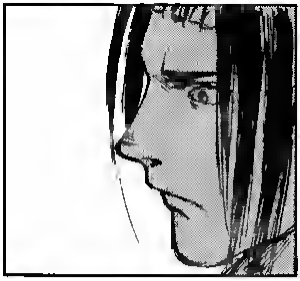

MONEY. FOR WHEN YOU PAID OFF MY BROTHEL CONTRACT.
IT'S THE REMAINING BALANCE THAT I OWE YOU.


HOW DO YOU MAKE A LIVING?

THIS IS A TINY VALLEY, AS YOU CAN SEE.
IT'S *FREIGHT* THAT KEEPS THEM GOING.
THE VILLAGERS TILL A LITTLE LAND. THEY RAISE SOME SILKWORMS... BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO LIVE ON.
RUNNERS AND BEARERS— *DOSHIMA* AND *BOKKA*. THEY CALL THEM— CARRY CARGO BETWEEN TOYAMA AND GUJO.
I WEAVE A KIND OF PADDED RAIN CLOAK THEY USE, CALLED *MINOGO*.
AND THEY BUY THEM FROM ME. AND I SURVIVE.
AND... WHAT *ELSE*?

YOU COULDN'T SAVE ALL THIS...
...WITH HANDI-CRAFTS. STOP *LYING.* *TELL* ME THE TRUTH.
.....
.....
.....
WHEN THE BEARERS AND FARMERS COME FOR THEIR... *MINOGO*...
I TAKE THEIR MONEY. AND THEN... I *SELL* MY *BODY.*
SATISFIED? DO YOU WANT *DETAILS*...?

KAGEHISA, DON'T...!
HOW COULD YOU?!



I AM NOT...
...AS WEAK OR TRAGIC A WOMAN AS YOU THINK.

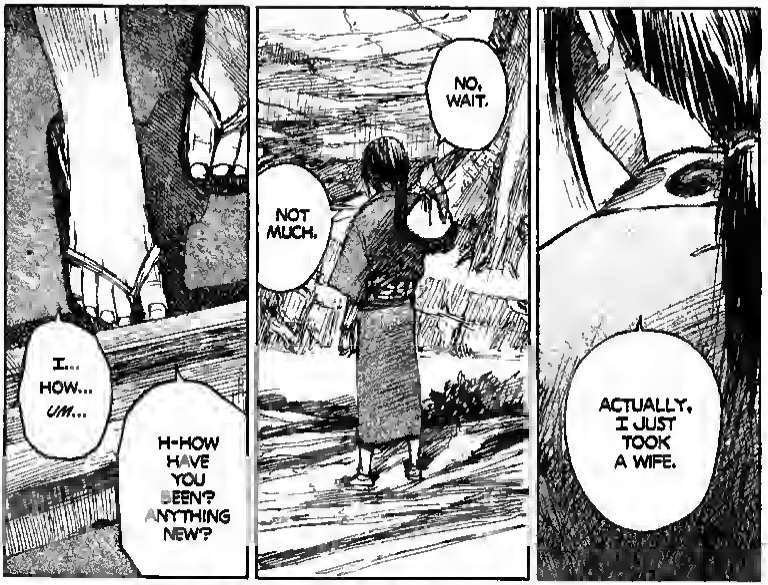
I GAVE MYSELF TO IT... GLADLY.
I SIMPLY FOUND A WAY TO SURVIVE WITHOUT DEPENDING ON ANYONE ELSE.

...LEAVING NO MARK ON ANYONE'S LIFE...
IF I CAN LIVE QUIETLY IN THIS VILLAGE, WORKING DAY BY DAY TO FEED MYSELF...

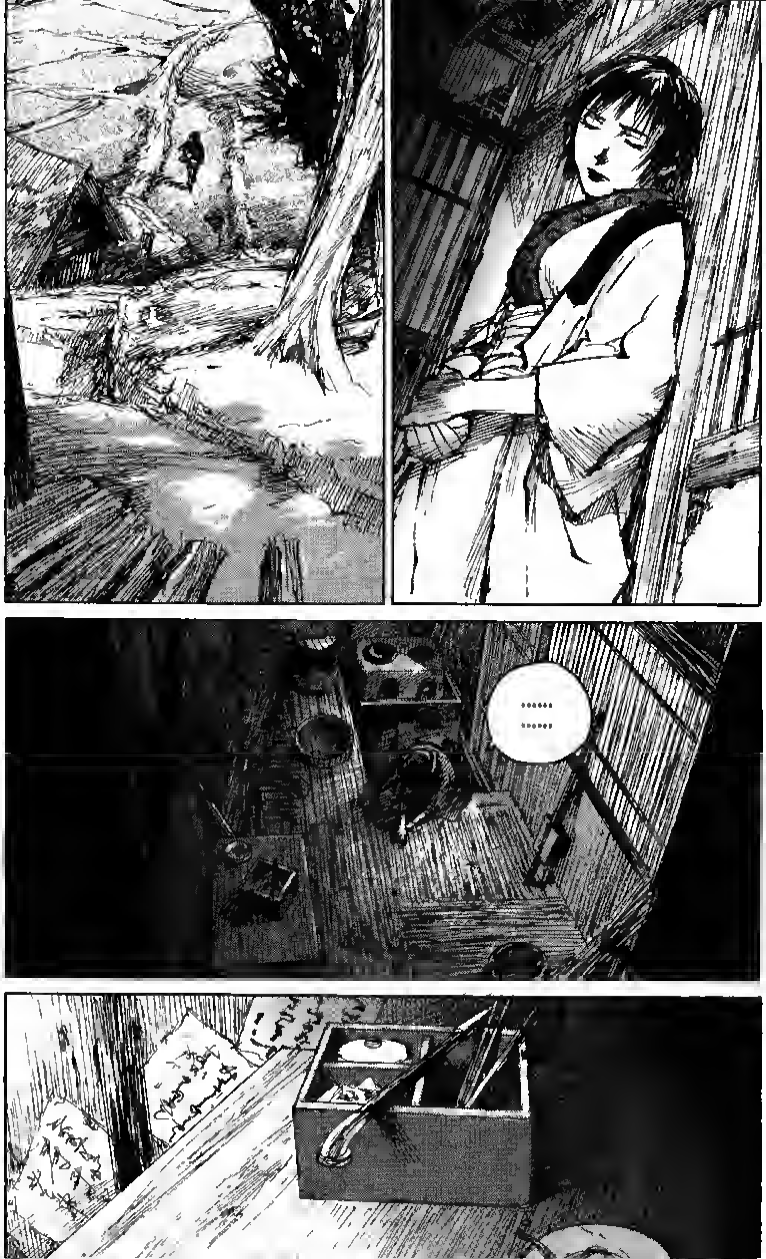
THEN... THAT'S ALL I NEED.
OH...
I TRIED HELPING WITH CLEARING THE FIELDS, BUT I WAS CLUMSY. I GOT BURNED...
YOUR HAND...?

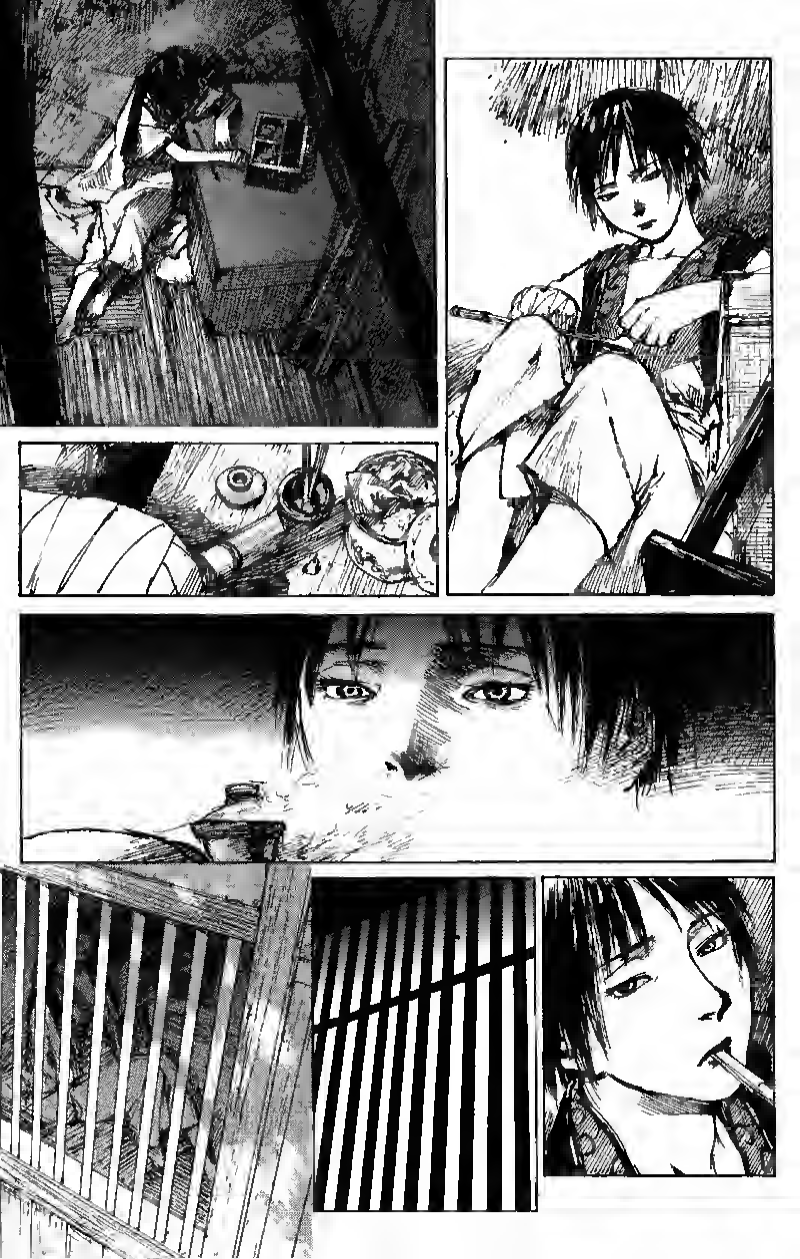
THEN TAKE THIS. FOR A DOCTOR.
.....
.....
.....
I STILL WANT YOU BACK IN THE ITTŌ-RYŪ. THAT HASN'T CHANGED.
I'LL SAY NO MORE.
BUT... AT VERY LEAST, TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH.
SAYONARA, MAKIE.

KAGE-
HISA-
SAMA!


H-HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? ANYTHING NEW?
I... HOW... Um...
NOT MUCH.
NO, WAIT.
ACTUALLY, I JUST TOOK A WIFE.

.....
.....
OH...





NNG...!
SHAK

MAKIE...!
TO BE CONTINUED...

LETTERS

send letters to:

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10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222
www.darkhorse.com · blade@darkhorse.com · www.studioproteus.com

Dear *Blade of the Immortal*,
I am so danged deliciously hooked by this comic book. I last collected comics in the early seventies, jumping ship at the time comics editors were coming up against a long, slow sales decline, and the dawn of the fine tipped marker. I was finally brought back by Alex Roth's *brilliant* juxtaposition of scenes in his poster-sized DC hero series (to this eye, the art form realized, even as the themes left me somewhat cold). Then a friend, an incorrigible internet compadre, suggested manga, and now I have the unexpected pleasure of introducing him to Samura's *Blade of the Immortal*. Beyond the flawless narrative, both tender and horrific, I'm infatuated by the satisfyingly deep art: the same millisecond shown from different, often extreme angles, telescopic lens effects, a mastery of the closeup and longview, looking up at a beautiful sky or the subtle deliciousness of moonlight shining within a room's interior. Three weeks ago, I experienced an art addict's dream: reading all of the *Blade* books in one go, absolutely devouring them—and now, like many others, I have to wait every month (I hope that this will not make me ill).

—James Umstattd
via email

Thanks, James...and welcome back to comics! With *Blade of the Immortal*, you're certainly devouring one of comic-dom's best graphic epics ever, and we're glad you're hooked. Very special thanks to all of Sensei-Samura's fans who are our faithful, monthly readers, enjoying the cliffhanger-to-cliffhanger action and making *Blade of the Immortal* such a successful series. We guarantee that there are some crazy, CRAZY action sequences coming up in the near future. As everyone knows, Hiroaki Samura is a master of timing, suspense, and frenetic fun. We'll see you here next month!

—Philip and Tim

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the

symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counter clockwise direction, and is called the manji in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hokenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

NEXT MONTH:
Mirror of the Soul, Part Two